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PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE SEVENTY-EIGHTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 21 June 1991, at 10.30 a.m.

President: Mr. PEERTHUM (Mauritius)
(Vice-President)

- Volcano eruption in the Philippines
- Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador: report of the Fifth Committee [158]
- Adoption of the agenda and organization of work: request submitted by the United States of America for the reopening of agenda items 127 and 128 [8] (continued)
- Programme of work

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In the absence of the President, Mr. Peerthum (Mauritius), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

VOLCANO ERUPTION IN THE PHILIPPINES

The PRESIDENT: Before turning to the first item on our agenda for this morning, may I, on behalf of all the members of the Assembly, extend to the Government and the people of the Philippines, recently struck by devastating volcanic eruptions, our deepest sympathy at this major natural disaster, which has caused tragic loss of life and extensive material damage.

May I also express the hope that the international community will show its solidarity and respond promptly and generously to any request for help.

Mr. ORDONEZ (Philippines): On behalf of President Corazon C. Aquino and of the Philippine Government, I wish to convey the appreciation of the entire Filipino nation for the generous assistance in the form of cash, construction materials and medical supplies donated to the victims of the disaster left by the eruption of Mount Pinatubo. Among the countries which responded immediately to the humanitarian call were Japan, the United States, Canada, the Republic of Korea, Australia and Germany. I am sure there are many others. Appropriate acknowledgements of these humanitarian acts are now being prepared.

The response of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) was very quick. On 17 June 1991 I received a letter from Mr. Philippe Boullé, Director of the New York Office, which I wish to quote. He wrote:

"I should like to refer to the disaster which struck your country during the second week of June 1991. For your information I am forwarding herewith the first information report issued by UNDRO giving

(Mr. Ordonez, Philippines)

all available details of the disaster to date. Please rest assured that we shall spare no efforts to assist your Government in dealing with the disaster."

In the Philippines Mr. Kevin McGrath, the UNDRO/United Nations Development Programme representative, has very effectively coordinated the delivery of assistance from various United Nations agencies and organizations.

The latest reports released by official sources indicate that 227 persons have died, that tens of thousands are homeless and that evacuation centres have been set up to give temporary shelter to the fleeing thousands. The food-producing capacity of the rich regions known as the Central Plains of Luzon, or the rice granary of the Philippines, has been severely damaged. The damage to infrastructures is enormous. The magnitude of the disruption can be gauged from the fact that radar data show that an ash cloud was detected 18,000 metres above sea level on 19 June and that ash fallout was recorded as far away as Singapore and Cambodia.

This calamity comes at a very unfortunate time in our national drive to attain economic stability and to preserve a democratic way of life, which we have tenaciously fought for in the last 93 years. It is largely because of the achievements of President Aquino in responding to the tasks of nation-building through the ways of democracy that the Pio Manzu International Research Centre of Italy named her "Woman of Peace of 1991", together with the naming of General Norman Schwarzkopf "Man of Peace 1991". This is the last year of Mrs. Aquino's presidential term; it will be very demanding, because it will be further complicated by the economic setback in the wake of the Mount Pinatubo disaster. But there is no doubt that she is encouraged by the enormous, wholehearted support of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations throughout the world.

(Mr. Ordonez, Philippines)

The mechanism for responding to calamities such as has been experienced from the Mount Pinatubo eruption was long ago put in place by the National Disaster Coordinating Council, now under the chairmanship of Mr. Fidel Ramos, National Defence Secretary, a body which I had the honour of serving before my assumption of responsibility in the United Nations. The early warning system of the Philippine Volcanology Commission and the prompt reaction of the National Disaster Coordinating Council undoubtedly averted a more serious disaster. The energetic response of all civic organizations is truly heartwarming. In addition to these agencies, the President has constituted a Pinatubo task force for comprehensive rehabilitation of devastated areas.

I believe that the calamity from which the Philippines is now reeling makes it all the more imperative that the United Nations should broaden its own programme of disaster prevention under its International Space Year agenda. Through every grey cloud there must some be some ray of hope, such as the proclamation by the United Nations of 1992 as International Space Year. This programme aims to coordinate various satellites in orbit to warn of potential floods, landslides and volcano eruptions, under the heading "Space and Disaster Prevention, Procedures and Relief". The leadership of Louis Walter of the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in this worthy endeavour is most welcome. His influential voice has been heard to say: "the world has a global observation system, but it is not being adequately used".

My Government's policy of responding to the needs of the time is not merely rehabilitative. President Aquino has announced that livelihood projects will be started in the disaster areas in order that the productive

(Mr. Ordonez, Philippines)

capacity of the distressed communities can be quickly restored. I firmly believe that the ashes, lava and burning rocks spewed by Mount Pinatubo will neither quiet nor halt the industrious and hardworking people of the Philippines. The recovery from the disaster will be hastened by the very valuable assistance which the Philippines is now receiving from its friends all over the world.

AGENDA ITEM 158

FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN EL SALVADOR: REPORT OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE (A/45/1026)

The PRESIDENT: I call on the Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee, Mr. Shamel Elsayed Nasser of Egypt, to introduce the Committee's report.

Mr. NASSER (Egypt), Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee: I have the honour, once again, of presenting to the General Assembly the report (A/45/1026) of the Fifth Committee on agenda item 158, "Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador".

As stated in paragraph 2 of the report, the Fifth Committee considered this item at its 61st and 62nd meetings, on 17 and 19 June 1991. At its 62nd meeting, the Chairman of the Committee put the text of the draft resolution contained in paragraph 7 of the report to the Committee for decision. I shall highlight only some aspects of this draft resolution.

In operative paragraph 1, the Assembly would decide to appropriate an amount of $13,000,000 net for pre-implementation costs for the operation of the Mission for the six-month period from 1 July to 31 December 1991, and requests the Secretary-General to establish a special account in accordance with paragraph 15 of document A/45/242/Add.1.

In operative paragraph 2, the Assembly would decide, as an ad hoc arrangement, to apportion the amount of $13,000,000 net among Member States in accordance with the composition of groups set out in paragraphs 3 and 4 of General Assembly resolutions 43/232 and 44/192 B.

Furthermore, the Assembly, in operative paragraph 6, would decide to authorize the Secretary-General to enter into commitments for the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador in an amount not to exceed $9,200,000 gross for the period from 1 January to 30 June 1992.

In operative paragraph 8, the Secretary-General is requested to take all necessary action to ensure that the Mission is administered with a maximum of efficiency and economy.

The draft resolution was adopted by the Fifth Committee without a vote.

The PRESIDENT: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the report of the Fifth Committee that is before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendation of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that under paragraph 7 of General Assembly decision 34/401 the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting, unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee".

May I remind delegations that, also in accordance with decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendation contained in the report of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we shall proceed to take a decision in the same manner as was done in the Fifth Committee.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution contained in paragraph 7 of the report of the Fifth Committee (A/45/1026).

(The President)

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 45/267).

The PRESIDENT: I now call on the representative of El Salvador.

Mr. MELENDEZ BARAHONA (El Salvador) (interpretation from Spanish): First of all, on behalf of the Government of El Salvador, and on my own behalf, I wish to express our solidarity with the Government and people of the Philippines in connection with the tragic events resulting from the natural disasters which have struck the country recently. We hope that the international community will continue to show solidarity in helping the people of the Philippines overcome the damaging consequences of these events.

Turning to the business now before us, I shall begin by saying how pleased my delegation is to be taking part in this resumed session, in particular because the principal item, "Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador", has a direct bearing on my country.

The approval by consensus of the report of the Fifth Committee and, similarly, the adoption of the resolution authorizing the financing of the Observer Mission - which will be an integrated peace-keeping operation and will have, in its first phase, the mandate of verifying that the human rights agreements between the Government of El Salvador and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), signed in San José, Costa Rica in July 1990, are being fulfilled - reflect the international community's understanding concerning the necessity and the importance of having an international, impartial and reliable mechanism to verify and guarantee the commitments between the parties, thereby helping achieve the priority objective of peace in El Salvador.

(Mr. Melendez Barahona, El Salvador)

We are convinced, as we have said on various occasions, that the implementation of Security Council resolution 693 (1991), even in a partial manner, is yet one more step forward in the peace-making process in El Salvador; we hope that very soon the international verification mechanism will be able to fulfil its mandate thoroughly, to the extent that my Government and the FMLN arrive at the necessary political accords to agree on a cease-fire and the end of the armed confrontation which has afflicted the Salvadorian people for over a decade.

Getting the verification machinery moving is of particular relevance and import by virtue of the fact that the parties will take on the obligation to cooperate with the Observer Mission in the fulfilment of its mandate; this, we believe, will in its turn have a deterrent and containing effect on the factors which give rise to violence and will result in an improvement in the situation in El Salvador in respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

It is important to note that, despite the obstacles which have cropped up throughout the negotiating process, which was restarted in Geneva in April 1990 under the auspices of the Secretary-General, substantial progress has been made; the agreements reached so far on human rights and constitutional reforms merit particular note. Regardless of political and military events in El Salvador, the process has continued, because the conviction exists that it is imperative to put an end to the armed confrontation by means of a negotiated political solution.

It will be understood that the points under discussion are becoming the more difficult and controversial the further the process advances; this is true of the present stage in the negotiations - in Queretaro, Mexico - which, in accordance with the Caracas agenda of 21 May 1990, is attempting to reach agreements on the armed forces and the cease-fire.

(Mr. Melendez Barahona, El Salvador)

None the less, my delegation is optimistic about the progress being made and about the results of the talks in this stage as a result of the announcement made to the press last Tuesday, 17 June, by the heads of the delegations of the Government of El Salvador and of the FMLN, in which they stated that they are close to reaching a cease-fire agreement. They were in agreement that there was a consensus on 95 per cent of the aspects related to the armed forces, and added that the Queretaro meeting might be the last or next-to-last in the negotiating process.

Although the 5 per cent which still remains is very complex, the prospects for a prompt cease-fire are promising, and, once that is achieved, the fact that there is an international verification mechanism will facilitate the implementation of the undertakings made by the parties, even though, in accordance with Security Council resolution 693 (1991), such tasks are subject to prior approval by the Council.

(Mr. Melendez Barahona, El Salvador)

As President Alfredo Cristiani has repeatedly said, the peace process in El Salvador is irreversible. There is no justifying violence and armed struggle as means of achieving political objectives, especially in the light of the profound changes in the international order, where there is a basic trend towards cooperation and solidarity to consolidate democracy and human freedoms in a climate enabling people fully to enjoy the fruits of development.

I wish in conclusion to reiterate our thanks for the support and solidarity of the international community aimed at swiftly achieving peace in El Salvador through the negotiating process under the auspices of the Secretary-General. In particular I take this opportunity to thank the delegation of Finland for its dedication in the preparation of the draft resolution submitted to the Fifth Committee and the delegation of Japan for its statement before that Committee in support of the peace process in El Salvador and the creation of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador. We share the belief of those delegations that this verification machinery will help improve the situation in El Salvador and help the Secretary-General fulfil his mission as a peace mediator.

The PRESIDENT: The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 158.

AGENDA ITEM 8 (continued)

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK: REQUEST SUBMITTED BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FOR THE REOPENING OF AGENDA ITEMS 127 AND 128 (A/45/1023)

The PRESIDENT: I should like to invite the attention of members to the letter dated 13 June 1991 from the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States of America addressed to the Secretary-General (A/45/1023), by which the United States of America, and on behalf of Australia, Canada, Japan,

(The President)

the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, requests that agenda items 127, "United Nations common system", and 128, "United Nations pension system", be reopened as soon as possible during the forty-fifth session in order to enable the Assembly to consider the impact on the United Nations common system and pension system of the decision of the International Telecommunication Union Administrative Council to implement unilaterally a pension purchasing protection insurance plan as well as the decision of the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union to grant a special post allowance to the professional staff.

May I take it that the Assembly has no objection, in the light of that request, to reopening consideration of agenda items 127 and 128?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: Members will recall that at its third plenary meeting, held on 21 September 1990, the Assembly allocated items 127 and 128 to the Fifth Committee for consideration.

May I take it that the Assembly again wishes to allocate those items to the Fifth Committee?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: The Chairman of the Fifth Committee will be informed of the decision just taken concerning the Fifth Committee.

I call on the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. HARKIN (United Kingdom): Since the date of the letter from the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States (A/45/1023) there have been developments in the International Labour Organisation relating to section V of resolution 45/242. My delegation believes these also deserve to

(Mr. Harkin, United Kingdom)

be considered by the Fifth Committee in addition to the developments in the International Telecommunication Union. We hope that procedural suggestion will prove acceptable.

PROGRAMME OF WORK

The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform members that the next plenary meeting of the General Assembly will be held next week on Friday, 28 June, to consider the report of the Fifth Committee on agenda items 127 and 128.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.